

Watering Ramp

Alabama Guide Sheet No. AL 561A



Definition

A facility to provide livestock limited access to streams or ponds for drinking water.

General Information

Watering ramps into streams or ponds should only be considered when no other sources of livestock water are practical.

Watering ramps are constructed with geotextile and stone according to guidelines for Heavy Use Area Protection (See Alabama Guide AL 561 - Heavy Use Area Protection). Ramps into streams should be no more than 20 feet wide, while the width of ramps into ponds should be determined to minimize livestock standing or wading in the pond. The entrance slope of ramps should be 5:1 or flatter. Surface runoff water from the pasture should be diverted away from the ramp.

Fencing is required so the cattle do not have access to the stream or pond except at the ramp location. The ramp surface both in the water and up the slope should be protected with heavy use area protection. The protection should extend to a point just beyond the exclusion fence.

Watering ramps into ponds should extend into the pond so that cattle have access even during drought conditions.

Watering ramps into streams should be placed perpendicular to the stream and at locations where the streambed and banks are stable. The ramp should extend at least 5 ft. into the stream or to the stream center, whichever is less.

In order to minimize cattle loafing time in the water, shade near the ramp should be eliminated. Also, other items in the pasture such as feeding locations, salt boxes, mineral feeders, and back-rubs should be located away from the watering ramp. Watering ramps should also be located near the center of pastures instead of at extreme ends.

All disturbed areas from construction of the watering ramp should be properly vegetated.

Operation and Maintenance

Fencing for watering ramps require routine inspection and maintenance to ensure the fence remains functional. This is especially true for stream watering ramps.

Any problems from cattle trails and potential gullying near the watering ramp should be repaired.

References

NRCS AL Conservation Practice Standards:
Code 561 - Heavy Use Area Protection
Code 382 - Fence
AL NRCS Guide Sheet:
AL 561 - Heavy Use Area Protection

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